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TAGS: [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [PREF](#) [SENV](#) [XC](#) [UN](#) [FAO](#)

SUBJECT: FAO'S AVIAN INFLUENZA ACTIVITIES

REF: (A) ROME 0877; (B) STATE 52911; (C) JAKARTA 04032

1. Summary. USUN Rome has been holding informal meetings with technical experts of the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to ascertain FAO's activities to contain Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Since January 2004 when the outbreaks first occurred, FAO and its collaborating partners, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Office International des Epizooties (OIE, or World Organization for Animal Health), have been actively involved in a campaign to contain and stamp out the disease. FAO would like more cooperative efforts with U.S. missions in affected countries. Comments are invited from these posts on FAO's HPAI technical assistance and control operations. USUN Rome can continue to provide information on FAO AI programs and facilitate communication with FAO management and at its headquarters. End Summary

2. Background: The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) viruses, also known as bird flu, have been in circulation for over 100 years, but FAO experts state they have never seen it behave this way where eleven countries (Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, North Korea, Pakistan, South Korea, Thailand, and Viet Nam) have reported outbreaks. An unprecedented number of outbreaks, coupled with the human dimension of infection resulting in death are requisite components for a possible pandemic.

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FAO's Role in Controlling Avian Influenza  
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3. As the lead UN agency for food and agriculture, FAO is mandated to recommend national and international action on animal health, particularly monitoring the occurrence and impact of animal diseases such as HPAI and developing policies for effective prevention and control. The livestock component of FAO's priority program for Emergency Prevention Systems for Trans-boundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES) promotes the effective containment and control of epidemic livestock diseases (e.g. HPAI) by progressive elimination on a regional and global basis through international cooperation on early warning and reaction, research, and coordination.

4. Since the outbreak last year, FAO has been collaborating closely with international partners, the most important of which is the World Health Organization (WHO), which evaluates the human aspect. WHO's aim is to monitor and control the outbreak in humans, conduct research and improve preparedness. FAO undertakes weekly conference calls with WHO to evaluate the situation and coordinate response.

5. FAO also works closely with the Office International des Epizooties (OIE, or World Organization for Animal Health), which is the lead international standards setting agency on animal health. OIE develops normative

rules that member states can follow to prevent the introduction of animal diseases and pathogens.

6. FAO and OIE are working jointly to establish a global framework on country-specific priorities for controlling HPAI. National, regional and international proposals are currently being drafted and coordinated with important regional stakeholders such as the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). FAO/OIE hope to release both regional and country approach project documents by the HPAI global strategy meeting being held in Bangkok from May 17-18, 2005. The meeting

will serve as a platform for the regional and international community to buy-in to operations in progress and those being proposed.

17. FAO also has been working closely with USDA on the APEC Symposium on Response to Outbreaks of Avian Influenza and Preparedness for a Human Health Emergency, which is scheduled for July 28-29, 2005, in San Francisco. An FAO representative, Dr. Watanee Kalpravidh, participated in the Steering Committee meeting and will make a presentation at the Symposium.

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Funding for HPAI: Predicted Needs and Pledges to Date  
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18. On March 30, senior FAO management reviewed funding needs for HPAI control. Earlier, FAO indicated country needs to combat AI will range around \$100 million, which was estimated based on the needs of three countries (Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia) to strengthen surveillance, disease control and vaccination, early warning systems and restructure the poultry sector in ten countries. Whether an appeal for that amount or greater will be launched before the May 2005 HPAI global strategy meeting is not yet certain. However, FAO is currently formulating two-page concept papers for each country and region, which will be sent to donors within the next few weeks.

19. In addition to the \$100 million, FAO estimates \$4 million is needed to bolster FAO Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) activities to maintain national laboratories and conduct regional epidemiological studies on HPAI.

110. Between FAO TCP and donor funds, approximately \$18 million have been invested to purchase equipment and provide technical assistance. Donors include the Asian Development Bank, Australia, France, Germany, Japan, and the World Bank. In March, both the European Union and Germany each pledged to FAO approximately \$6 million (Euros 5 million) as start-up funds for developing regional and country specific projects. The Netherlands has pledged \$250,000 for bolstering FAO's Emergency Center for the Control of Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) with a Dutch visiting scientist for six months, followed by a series of Dutch experts, including the

country's Chief Veterinary Officer. Meanwhile, Finland has also expressed interest to fund project proposals.

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Recent Outbreaks: North Korea Yes, Myanmar Maybe  
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111. On North Korea, FAO experts suspected the virus was circulating for six months prior to the Government of North Korea's recent public acknowledgement of an outbreak, but could not confirm the information. On March 29, FAO's Bangkok-based Senior Veterinary Officer (SVO) traveled to North Korea to review the situation and conduct diagnostic tests. The SVO already has met with WHO experts. Meanwhile, at the behest of the North Korean delegation in Rome, FAO HPAI experts have met with members to discuss FAO programs and technical assistance. A joint press release will state, "At a farm near Pyongyang, 160,000-200,000 chickens were noted with high mortality indicative of Avian Influenza. Similar mortality conditions were noted in two neighboring communities. Approximately 219,000 animals have been culled, while the remaining in the surrounding areas will be vaccinated." FAO's Regional Coordinator for Mongolia, China, and North and South Korea, Dr. Guo, will travel to North Korea on April 2 to assist further with diagnostics.

112. FAO experts also indicate there is an unconfirmed report of an outbreak in Myanmar. FAO is working with other organizations to verify this information.

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What has FAO done? Strategy and Actions for Containment since January 2004  
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113. FAO experts contend that they and their international partners have a lid on the situation, but not control, and that much progress has been made in early detection and rapid response, with fewer recorded outbreaks this year. Eradication, however, will be a multi-year effort. If the HPAI virus mutates to a more virulent strain, the problem will be much more severe and could give rise to a pandemic. FAO experts stressed the need to invest in the agriculture and veterinary sectors

to tackle the source, namely, fowl and poultry in Asia, today. To eradicate HPAI, FAO has come up with a multi-faceted approach:

- Increasing public awareness activities, technical assistance, and training, involving all stakeholders from rural farmers to animal/public health officials, to the international community;
- Improving diagnostic and monitoring measures;
- Strengthening veterinary networks; and
- Instituting guidelines for disease control/stamping out and prevention.

Over the course of the year, FAO implemented a series of 19 emergency projects involving these approaches, covering an area from Pakistan to Indonesia.

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Increase Public Awareness and Technical Assistance  
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14. Within days of the outbreak in January 2004, FAO held a series of coordination and/or technical meetings, either individually or jointly with WHO and OIE. Most recently from February 23-25, 2005, it co-hosted with OIE a regional "lessons learned" meeting in Ho Chi Minh City, at which over 2,000 experts and delegates attended, to assess the HPAI situation one year after the outbreak. USDA and DHHS have made significant contributions to the organization and work of FAO's technical consultations.

15. FAO established a Technical Task Force on Avian Influenza composed of FAO animal disease experts at Rome headquarters and its regional office in Bangkok. At the onset, FAO had at its disposal over 25 experts. It continues to deploy these experts to the region to advise national and local authorities on measures to control HPAI.

16. FAO also established the Emergency Center for the Control of Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD), to strengthen and streamline FAO support to countries and regions facing HPAI and other animal diseases. ECTAD's campaign against HPAI is coordinated by its Avian Influenza Task Force.

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FAO Diagnostics and Research Activities  
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17. FAO's Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) set up six national TCPs (in Vietnam, Indonesia, China, Pakistan, Cambodia and Laos) to better grasp and analyze the situation, conduct diagnostics and surveillance, and implement contingency plans. It subsequently set up six regional TCPs and two international TCPs.

18. FAO is conducting studies on the incidence of disease over different practices. For example, a review of local farming systems is helping to understand causality and origins of the disease. FAO is exploring risk factors in rice/rice paddies, duck production, etc., that contribute to the spread of HPAI.

19. FAO is using its own software known as Trans-boundary Animal Diseases Info (TADInfo), which has a mapping and geographic information systems (GIS) component that customizes the software to each country, to combat HPAI.

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Strengthening Veterinary Networks  
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20. Because regional collaboration is crucial in combating a trans-boundary disease like HPAI, FAO

launched a veterinary network project named "Diagnostic Laboratory and Surveillance Network Coordination for Control and Prevention of Avian Influenza," to enhance epidemiological surveillance, diagnosis and control in 23 countries through three sub-regional networks. The networks not only act as training and information exchange platforms, but also promote harmonized standards for disease detection and reporting for national laboratories. (Veterinarians from the region have taken samples from all birds in native countries as well as in countries where birds migrate, and sent the samples to designated laboratories for proper diagnosis.) The three sub-regional networks are divided as follows:

- Southeast Asia (SEA), covering Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, East Timor and Viet Nam;
- South Asia (SA), covering Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka;
- East Asia (EA), covering China, Japan, the Democratic

Peoples Republic of Korea, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea.

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#### FAO Guidelines and Initiatives

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121. FAO issued or published the following:

- Guiding Principles on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza;
- Recommendations for Prevention, Control and Eradication of HPAI in Asia (with the support of the OIE);
- FAOAIDE news bulletin (or FAO Avian Influenza Disease Emergency news) issued by the FAO Technical Task Force on Avian Influenza to provide monthly updates; and
- EMPRES bulletin (to disseminate studies on HPAI epidemiology)

122. FAO and OIE jointly launched the Global Framework for Progressive Control of Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) initiative. GF-TADs is a facilitating mechanism to empower countries and regional alliances to build capacity and establish programs to target TADs. HPAI ranks seventh on a list of twenty-five priority TADs.

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#### Across Asia: FAO's View on Individual Country's Progress

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123. When asked for a ranking of countries doing well in combating HPAI, FAO experts believe China and Malaysia lead due to their willingness to conduct the surveillance activities requested by FAO. China's advantage over Malaysia is its ability to produce high quantities of HPAI vaccines. Thailand and Viet Nam follow, although Viet Nam's political will to implement surveillance programs is stronger than its capacity. Laos and Cambodia are far behind for their inability to conduct the required surveillance (for lack of funds). Indonesia's difficulty is the cost to import the vaccine. Pakistan's laboratory equipment and materials are quite dated (circa 1960's), and the country needs good

laboratory facilities to institute good manufacturing practices.

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#### FAO Programs in the Pipeline

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124. FAO has underway or is considering developing the following proposals to strengthen early warning systems, surveillance, and build laboratory capacity in HPAI affected countries:

- A) A regional project to strengthen HPAI control through improved trans-boundary animal disease management system in Asia;
- B) Establishing an ECTAD trust fund that allows for cross country funding;
- C) Bolstering ECTAD through a visiting scientist program or in-kind expert assistance, replicating the Dutch project; and
- D) Creating or emulating a USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Emergency Operations Center (AEOC) like facility. AEOC, in Riverdale, MD, serves as the national command and coordination center for APHIS emergency programs for managing emergency projects.

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#### Areas for Further Collaboration

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125. In addition to funding the purchase of diagnostic equipment and protective gear, FAO experts requested assistance in establishing national scholarships to train local experts on FAO/OIE guidelines on diagnostics, bio-safety, environment, and disposal/waste management. For example, local experts could be sent to the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, to be trained on standardized OIE diagnostic procedures. FAO also requested assistance in facilitating the couriering of laboratory samples across borders in the region to designated facilities. More information can be found on FAO's Web site at [http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special\\_avian.html](http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special_avian.html)

126. Missions can tie in to FAO regional programs by communicating directly with FAO representatives (FAORs) and requesting to participate in HPAI donor coordination meetings. For example, FAO indicated that Deputy FAOR in Jakarta, Benni Sormin, will continue to lead the donor coordination meetings at post. Following is a list of FAORs or deputies and e-mails:

- Cambodia: Jean Claude Levasseur, [FAO-KH@fao.org](mailto:FAO-KH@fao.org)

- India: Daniel John Gustafson, [FAO-IN@fao.org](mailto:FAO-IN@fao.org)
- Indonesia: Benni Sormin, [FAO-ID@fao.org](mailto:FAO-ID@fao.org)
- Korea DPR: Ri Sony Chol, [Ri.Sony.Chol@undp.org](mailto:Ri.Sony.Chol@undp.org)
- Laos: Leena Kirjavainen, [FAO-LA@fao.org](mailto:FAO-LA@fao.org)
- Myanmar: Zhengping Tang, [FAO-MMR@fao.org](mailto:FAO-MMR@fao.org)
- Nepal: Kazuyuki Tsurumi, [FAO-NP@fao.org](mailto:FAO-NP@fao.org)
- Pakistan: Ronny Adhikarya, [FAO-PK@fao.org](mailto:FAO-PK@fao.org)
- Sri Lanka: Mazla Mohamad Jusoh, [FAO-LK@fao.org](mailto:FAO-LK@fao.org)

- Thailand: Hiroyuki Konuma, [FAO-THA@fao.org](mailto:FAO-THA@fao.org)
- Viet Nam: Anton Rychener, [FAO-VNM@fao.org](mailto:FAO-VNM@fao.org)

127. Posts in affected countries are welcome to provide comments relating to FAO's HPAI technical assistance and control operations. USUN Rome can continue to provide information on FAO programs and facilitate communication with FAO management and experts. USUN Rome will continue to engage FAO further on measures being taken for efficient and effective response to the HPAI emergency.

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